



# What's in the Light

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE HARFORD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Volume 10 / Issue 1

February 2008

As a guiding force within our community, we actively pursue opportunities to promote the growth and development of families, empower people in need and protect vulnerable children and adults.



**The world is a looking glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it and it will in turn look sourly upon you; laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly, kind companion.**

--William Makepeace Thackeray

## Black History Month 2008

By: Priscilla Harvin

The Black History Committee members: Londa Rosette, Sandra Jackson, Priscilla Harvin, Beverly Fuller, Tenille Wilhite, Angie Collins, Pam Rumsey, Sarah Adams, Leslie Greene, Jocelyn Claiborne, Georgina Atueyi and Barbara Kemp.

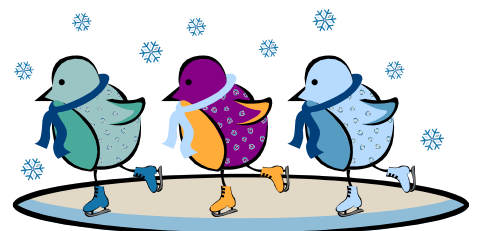
Our theme this year is **“Commemorating the past, and celebrating our future.”** Black History month is a time to reflect on the past and to remember the contributions made by our forefathers and pioneers. It is also a time to look for and expect changes for the future. It's a time to embrace who we are as African Americans. This time of reflection brings about joy and a sense of pride for our role in America. We are about to embark on history in the making. This is a new beginning, a beginning of change. As we begin this time of celebration, it is with great hope that we will continue to grow as a people of color.

We are living Dr. Martin Luther King's dream; “that all men are created equal.”

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## **2007-2008 HARFORD COUNTY DSS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

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Board Meetings are held the third Thursday  
of the month (September–June) at 6:30  
p.m. in the Bel Air DSS conference room.

\*\*\*\*\*

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\*\*\*\*\*



Martin O'Malley, Governor  
Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor  
Brenda Donald, Secretary

## ***Director's Corner***

In the movie "Pleasantville", we are presented with a worldview where the norm of life is perfection, stereotypes of men and women are promulgated and life is presented in black and white. Then change agents are introduced (Bud and his sister) and things begin to happen – women become assertive, bowling 300 by all the men is no longer the case and color is slowly brought to their world. It is movie that underscores change and the resistance to and denial of change coupled with frustration and anger that borders on violence. Ultimately, the scenes and the townsfolk are all in color, brought to full bloom, with each person hopeful. Yet, their anxiety over their new roles and context are underscored by the question, "So what's going to happen now"?

If there is a constant in life it is that we are forever faced with change. It is a force, which we both embrace and fear, like the residents of Pleasantville. With any change we ask, "What does it mean for me?" and "How will I be affected?". Consider the possible changes to your life, e.g., marriage, parenthood, academic achievement, job changes, aging, etc. and think of how you reacted to these change agents. Also, consider that "If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies".

On an organizational level we are now confronted with significant changes and forces across our local operations. Rising caseloads, reduced staffing patterns, seeking alignment with the Department's Place Matters initiative, StateStat, MD CHESSIE, work participation rates, food stamp payment accuracy, achieving child support goals, procurement issues, etc. have led to recent changes in our business process and to staffing reassignments. Our desire is to improve the outcomes for those we serve – for that is why we are here, to become more efficient and to always remain mindful of the stresses upon our staff and to ameliorate those stresses to the extent possible. As an organization we need, now more than ever, to embrace our vision and mission and to live our values on a daily basis.

Odette Pollar, speaker and author, once stated, "Embrace change. It's going to happen whether you like it or not". It is the task of leadership, which includes all of us at HCDSS, to make change in as planful a manner as possible and to do so with the good of our client base in mind. As in the movie "Pleasantville", we need to always strive to bring color and life to our world, even though we may ask, "What's going to happen now?" Always know that while the answer may be, "I don't know", that we are in this together as a team, and as an organizational "family" we will get through any change together and be the better for it!♥

Jerome M. Reyerson, LCSW-C

## Black History Month (continued from page 1)

This year we again started the celebration with a kick-off luncheon. This luncheon introduced some of the wonderful African American art works, books, games, music and pictures. The food was great and so was the fun. There was a time of sharing and learning. The game “Who Am I” was played. We have some history buffs in our midst. The pictiary game was a success. There were three door prizes given. Our Director won one of the prizes.

This year our Brown Bag Lunch featured a presentation by the Harford County NAACP and a Praise Dance. This was a premier presentation for the Black History Celebration. Priscilla Harvin and her daughter, Sharnetta, performed a dance entitled, “Loose the shackles off my feet, so I can dance.”

There were six representatives from the NAACP. It was a very informative setting. There was an opportunity for questions and answers. If you missed it, you missed an opportunity to gain insight into what exactly the NAACP does.

The line dance is always a big blast, that’s the time where you can learn all types of line dances and dance away some pounds.

The hit of the Black History Month Celebration is “The Soul Food Luncheon.” Everyone participates and show off their favorite food. We have enough food to feed an army. It’s a great time to enjoy lunch with your co-workers and others. The food is delicious and plentiful. The hit of the luncheon are the desserts. (Do you agree?) The room and atmosphere is set just right for dining.

Our final featured event for the month is a well-deserved Health Fair. This is an opportunity to have your blood pressure taken. Information pertaining to the diseases that affect African Americans can be obtained during this Fair.

Over the past years the Black History Committee, through hard work and tireless efforts, have donated their charitable contributions to a deserving organization. This year’s donation has not been decided upon. The recipients are always more than appreciative for the contribution.

Thank you for your support and contributions during the sponsored events. We cannot achieve success without your assistance.

We look forward to next year as we continue to provide activities and events that will educate and give us more insight into people of color and their culture.♥

## P.R.I.D.E. Committee

By Pam Capen

Just what is the P.R.I.D.E. Committee and who are the members? Let me introduce you. The Pride Committee stands for Public Relations In Developing Excellence. This committee was created to improve the image of Harford County Department of Social Services to both the community and within DSS.

Members are from the Citizen’s Advisory Board and DSS. Current members are Robbyn Zimmerman, Chairperson (Family Services), Pam Abramson (Family Services), Pam Capen (In-Home Administration), Kim Cowie (Family Services), Kim Hare (Adult Services), Jay Kozak (BB&T Bank), Debbie Meshensky (Child Support), Cindy Weyant (Big Brothers/Big Sisters Organization) and Tracie Young (Child Protective Services).

We are currently working on a few projects such as a speaker’s bureau to go out into the community and talk about what DSS has to offer. Kim Cowie is heading up this project.

The Pride Committee meets the last Monday of each month in Conference Room B at 2:00 p.m. New members are always welcome. Come, meet with us - maybe you’ll want to stay. ♥

# A Night to Remember 2007

By: Billie Ferguson

On December 8, 2007, 275 foster/adoptive family members, relative caregivers, foster/adoptive children, and staff gathered at the Fairmeadows Gymnasium to celebrate the Christmas Holiday. The Harford Community Church sponsored the event for the 6th year in a row, coordinating all of the details for the party. Brenda Sponsky of the HCDSS Child Resource Unit worked closely with the church staff and volunteers to plan the event.



Adoptive parents Kim and Larry enjoy the evening with Woody and Michael

Once again, searchlights and luminaries lit the way to the party and the magic of the Christmas Season thrilled adults and children alike. The gymnasium was decked out for the holidays with beautiful poinsettias and lit Christmas trees.

This year's theme was family fun. Dinner was served family style and included all the typical holiday favorites: Turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes, corn, salad, rolls, and pies for dessert. Each table participated in a variety of family games, and generous door prizes and

prizes for winners of the games were awarded.



Adoptive parents and children have a laugh as they are decorated as Christmas trees.

At the end of the evening, each child received gifts in decorated gift bags. And as a new treat, the church awarded each 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grader, a free week of camp at the church, including the cost of before and after care. Each 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grader received a certificate for four free music lessons. What a great and thoughtful addition!

The Child Resource Unit would like to publicly thank the Harford Community Church for their labor of love. This party would not be possible without a lot of hard work from a lot of people. Thank you to all

of the church and community members who made this event memorable for all of our foster/adoptive families. They deserve special treatment! ♥



# Harford County Celebrates National Adoption Month

By: Billie Ferguson

In recognition of adoption and all of the foster/adoptive families in Harford County, the Harford County Department of Social Services joined with Governor Martin O'Malley and Department of Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald and the State of Maryland in celebrating National Adoption Month during the month of November. National Adoption Month celebrates the



Riley, Thomas and Christopher take a break from the fun to get their picture taken.

hard work and sacrifice it takes

to be a foster/adoptive parent and celebrates adoptions. Two special events took place in Harford County to celebrate adoptions and to honor Harford County adoptive families.

On November 13, 2007, the Harford County Council and Judge William Carr recognized adoption in Harford County by presenting a Proclamation to the Harford County Department of Social Services, proclaiming National Adoption

Day in Harford County. Jill Svrjcek, Assistant Director of Services and Debbie DiEdoardo, Adoption Social Worker were present to receive the proclamation from the County Council.

On Wednesday, November 14, 2007, the Harford County Circuit Court and the Harford County Department of Social Services celebrated National Adoption Day in Harford County with morning adoption ceremonies. As is tradition, Judge Cypert Whitfill presided over the adoptions, making the ceremonies special. Three families adopted five children, giving these children permanent, loving families. In the evening, a special party was held at Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen to honor all adoptive families currently open with the Harford County Department of Social Services and their children. The open house highlighted adoption in Harford County and helped families celebrate the adoptions they already completed. ♥



Brooke has some one-on-one time with the entertainment.



Stephanie Pettaway and Secretary Brenda Donald recognize the Bauld Family as the Harford County Family of the Year.

# HEAR Committee News

By Juanita Carroll

## What Happens To The Money I Donate Throughout The Year?

**100% of the money donated to the HEAR Committee throughout the year is spent on staff activities such as:**

- \$ All of the food on the first four days of Staff Appreciation Week
- \$ The door prizes and table centerpieces at the annual all staff meeting on the Friday of Staff Appreciation week
- \$ Pizza luncheon during Social Work Month
- \$ Kitchen supplies (paper plates, plastic ware, napkins, etc.)
- \$ This past December, and hopefully again this year, the holiday party at the Top of The Bay (hall rental, food, DJ, table centerpieces, etc.)

The Daffodil Days 2008 campaign will begin soon. The order deadline is February 19, 2008. The Daffodils will be in on March 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>.

The next HEAR Committee Meeting will be held on February 29 at 2:30 p.m. in the Bel Air office. Everyone is invited to attend. We welcome new members and suggestions.♥

### **Classified Ad**

Available – 3 hamsters (teddy bear), male, 6 weeks old. One is tan with a white stomach and the other two are light brown with a black stripe on the back with a white stomach. They are really cute. Contact Joanne Sanders at 410-836-4705 if interested.



### **What's in the Light**

#### **A PUBLICATION OF THE HARFORD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

JEROME M. REYERSON, DIRECTOR

TAMARA BRINKMAN, EDITOR

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*Diverse views are presented and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or the official policies of DHR and HCDSS.*

### **Submission Information**

Effective with this issue, *What's in the Light* will be published quarterly and will be sent on January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1. Submissions for the April issue of *What's in the Light* are due in writing to **Tammy Brinkman** in the Director's Office by **Monday, March 17, 2008**. All articles should go through the appropriate assistant director first. Classified ads may go directly to Ms. Brinkman, but please limit your ads to no more than **two per person** and no more than **25 words per ad**.

# Recognition of Staff

Congratulations to all staff who helped to make the Harford County Department of Social Services a “Big Bloomer” for being a Top 10 Daffodil Days Supporter in the 2007 Harford County Daffodil Days Campaign for the American Cancer Society. The American Cancer Society says, “Thank you for your great commitment and generosity in the fight against cancer.”

Thank you to all staff who contributed towards the Faith Communities and Civic Agencies United, Inc. casual dress month. With your help, we raised \$820.00 for the local homeless shelter.

Thank you to all staff who participated in the Maryland Charity Campaign either by pledging, donating items to the book sale or buying items at the book sale. Harford County DSS was able to contribute \$7,594.00 to help other community organizations in our county, state, country and around the world. ♥

## Greetings & Farewells

### New Appointments

**Diari Banigo** began employment on 11/5/07 as a case manager for the homeless through Harford County Government

**Stephanie Cady** became a merit employee in Family Investment on 11/21/07

**Kristine Bowers** began employment on 12/10/07 as a Personnel Specialist in the Human Resources unit

**Nancy Markland** began employment on 1/2/08 as an Office Secretary II in Child Support in Diane Messner’s unit

**Lydia Cartwright** will begin employment on 1/7/08 as a contractual IM Specialist I at the WAGE Connection in Jenny Jimenez-Kruse’s unit

**Barbara Darbouze** began employment on 2/6/08 as a Family Service worker in Tawana Nolan’s unit

### Farewells

**Richard Mason** transferred to Baltimore City DSS effective 11/13/07

**Giselle Klimek** transferred to Howard County DSS effective 12/7/07

**Suzanne Ayres** transferred to Maryland State Department of Education effective 12/18/07

# Come See the Cherry Blossoms

Washington, D.C.

April 5, 2008

Sponsored by the HEAR Committee

**Cost: \$45.00 per person**

**\*\*snacks provided\*\***

Pick Up From Bel Air DSS parking lot 7:00 am

Departure from DC (location TBA) 5:30 pm

Return to Bel Air DSS parking lot 7:00 pm

Our day in Washington DC will begin at 8:30 am to 12:30 pm with a guided tour to the Cherry Blossoms with plenty of time for photos. Then on to the monuments and sights that may be too far to walk to in one day. The bus will drop us off at the Mall after the tour. Then you will have time on your own to explore until our departure at 5:30 pm. This could be a great gift idea for that special someone.

Please contact Karen Smith in Child Support by **March 5, 2008** to purchase your tickets.

**\*\*cash or money order preferred\*\***

410-420-6068

[KSmith4@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:KSmith4@dhr.state.md.us)



Twas the night before show cause, when all thru the place  
The NCP's were stirring, all had a worried face.  
Large wallets stuffed, in their pockets with care,  
In hopes that their agents, won't know that it's there.

Every CU was nestled, all smug in their beds,  
While visions of lump sums danced in their heads,  
The baby mama in her kerchief, with her new dude,  
She was out for blood, and in a foul mood.

When out on the street there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutter, and threw up the sash.

The light was falling on Main Street below,  
Giving the luster of midday to the show.  
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a miniature parade of eight agenteers.

With a well known Judge, the head-honcho, the star,  
I knew it must be his Honor William Carr.  
More rapid than eagles, his coursers they came,  
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name:

“Now Rickster, Now Alfred!  
Now Pammy and Bekkie!  
On Jessie! On Debbies!  
On Carolyn and Betty!  
To the bottom floor!  
To court room A!  
Dash away! Dash Away!  
Dash away!”

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky  
So up to the “Big House” the sheriffs they flew,  
With a van full of deadbeats, and some shady employers too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard from the street  
The prancing and pawing of all the little feet.  
As I drew in my head and was turning around,  
Down from his bench Judge Carr came with a bound.

He was dressed all in black, from his head to his toe,  
And his clothes were all wrinkled from manning the show.  
A bundle of bench warrant he flung on his back,  
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head  
Soon gave all to know they had something to dread.  
He spoke his word and got straight to dispositions,  
And signed all the orders with special conditions.

He sprang to his feet, to his team gave a whistle,  
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.  
But I heard him exclaim, ‘ere he walked out of sight,

“Civil Contempt to all, now get out of my sight!”

# RIGHT NOW

By Alvo Antonelli

You gotta wake up every morning,  
With a smile on your face  
Sing a song to the sunshine  
Or take a walk in the rain  
Don't let the weight of the world  
Crush you beneath the wheel  
Don't let the wicked or the righteous  
Tell you how to feel

Because every moment  
Yes this very moment  
Is your moment to shine

So get naked  
Dance and shout  
Show the world  
What you're all about

Right now-right now-right now,  
Right now right now right now right now  
Right now-right now-right now

You gotta take hold of your future  
With firm but gentle grace  
Leave your past behind you  
Learn from your mistakes  
Capture lightening in a bottle  
Sail the seven seas  
Find the courage and conviction  
To chase your every dream

Because every moment  
Yes this very moment  
Is your moment to shine

So get naked  
Dance and shout  
Show the world  
What you all about  
Right now-right now-right now

Having a child  
Is a wonder, a joy  
Crazy, mixed up confusion  
Caused by a baby girl or boy,  
To nurture and love  
To teach, guide, lead  
How to ride a bike  
And how to write and read.  
But what if there were a way to share  
These beautiful times of growing  
With five or even ten children  
That's a secret worth knowing.  
Through a brief phone call  
Or chime of a doorbell  
Comes a familiar voice  
A social worker we know so well.  
A child needs a home  
A place to spend the night  
We'll bring him by at six  
Or earlier; is that all right?  
She's fifteen years old  
He's only eight  
They'll leave next week  
Or maybe at a later date.  
An infant or a toddler  
Pre-teen bickering and pointless fights  
Long and difficult days  
Followed by tiresome, crazy nights.  
But through it all we are given  
The chance to shape a life  
To quiet the fear in a face  
To end loneliness and strife.  
No sacrifice is too big  
When you receive such a prize  
Of a trusting smile  
And happy, satisfied eyes.  
And so we have two kids, four, maybe seven  
Of varying ages, religions and races  
Our foster, adoptive and biological children  
A mix of young, innocent faces  
A household of varying size  
But every one of us here for each other  
With plenty of love and caring to spare  
We're family -and there's always room for another.

*Natasha Lee Hochlowski*  
(19 year old foster family birth child)